

Colossians: It's All About Jesus

Lesson 4 **Jesus Is Our Truth!** **Colossians 2:8–23**

When someone says that truth is relative or there is no absolute truth, it means that they believe there is no standard of truth. In this case, truth can vary depending on circumstances, situations, and opinions. There are a variety of problems to this way of thinking. For instance, if there are no absolute truths then that statement cannot even be absolutely true. Or further, what if one truth calls another truth a lie, can both still be true? It quickly gets confusing!

This is where following Jesus leads us to differ drastically from culture because He is truth (John 18:37). As we come to Colossians 2, Paul begins addressing some false beliefs that are lingering throughout the Colossians church. But we will see that even though these lies were being promoted as truths, they fall short of Jesus, the only truth.

Our World PROMOTES LIES

Colossians 2:8, *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*

Our world will tell us over and over again that there are many different ways to live. But notice that Paul stresses the importance of not falling victim to outside worldviews. A worldview is the all-encompassing perspective on everything that exists and matters to a person. A worldview is how someone thinks about and operates in this world.

Our world lies and intentionally deceives us into thinking things that are false have the potential to be true. But as Paul warns, those ideas can take us captive. False ideas about God can destroy communion with the One true God. False ideas about humanity can leave us searching for fulfillment in a variety of messed up ways. Everything outside of the confines of God's truth is hollow, deceptive, human-driven, and false-spirit driven. The world is constantly trying to shape how we think and if we aren't careful they will teach us to believe all sorts of lies about God.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the lies our culture promotes?
- How equipped do you feel to discern false beliefs from the truth?

We Must STAND FIRM ON THE TRUTH:

Though the world wants to knock us off balance by deviating from God's truth, we must learn to stand on Jesus, our rock and our foundation because:

- **Only Jesus Has THE POWER TO SAVE**

***Colossians 2:9–14**, For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ,¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.*

In this passage, Paul circles back to Christology to bolster His Gospel stance. He argues that the fullness of God was in bodily form and this is the only way that we can be back in His fullness. To solidify his point, he brings out the Old Testament practice of circumcision to remind these believers of the sufficiency of Christ's work to bring salvation. Circumcision was the physical sign of God's covenant with His people in the Old Testament, showing Israel's special relationship with God. This passage is one of many in the New Testament that explains Jesus as the fulfilment of God's covenant to His people. Rather than talk about the need for physical alterations and external actions, Paul says every person needs a spiritual transformation to be a part of God's people. Only Jesus can do this. Every other pursuit is hollow and deceptive. In salvation, Jesus takes our dead, uncircumcised heart and resurrects them. Therefore, baptism is mentioned in the same context to bring out this reality.

Toward the end of these verses, Paul highlights the fact that we stood rightfully condemned before God and we were cut off from the people of God. Jesus alone can cancel the charges brought against us. Jesus alone can nail them to the cross. Every other lie from the world attempts to fix the problem of sin through some variation of human effort, but they can't. Only Jesus erases the problem through His effort.

- **Only Jesus Is WORTHY OF WORSHIP**

Colossians 2:15, *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

Jesus humiliates what once condemned us and now reigns as the triumphant king. Jesus makes a public spectacle of all other worldviews because he proves them false. He proves that they do not possess the power that he possesses. There are five basic questions a person can ask to determine someone's worldview: 1) Who or what is God? 2) Who or what are we? 3) What happens when we die? 4) How do we know what is right and wrong? 5) What is the purpose of life?

If you trace out any other worldview, belief system, or philosophical train of thought, each one is insufficient to be totally true. Only Jesus can answer these questions sufficiently, therefore He alone is worthy to be praised.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the truth of Jesus differ from some of the lies culture promotes?
- How bold are you when it comes time for standing up for the truth?
- **Only Jesus Is ENOUGH**

Colossians 2:16–19, *Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.¹⁸ Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind.¹⁹ They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

We don't need to add to the work of Jesus, He is enough. Where Paul seems to be addressing outsiders in the previous verses, now he addresses the Jewish insiders who were adding and twisting the Gospel. He argues that not only can deceptive worldviews infiltrate Christianity from the outside, sometimes they can rise from within when people lose sight of Jesus' sufficiency.

A shadow gives you an outline of a figure, but it is not the figure itself. These verses tell us that all the Old Testament rituals, festivals and Sabbaths have been fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 5:17–20). Jesus is the substance where there used to be only a vague shadow. As much as we want to be careful against outside philosophies, we also need to be careful about insider mutations of the good news. If we make the Gospel into a works-based system, or we

become more infatuated with fanciful ideas and intellectual pursuits, we lose track of what it really means to follow Jesus. Paul goes as far to say that those who are deceived in these ways have lost connection with the head (think back to Lesson 2!).

- **Only Jesus Is WORTHY OF PURSUING**

Colossians 2:20–23, *Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? ²² These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

We pursue truth when we pursue a relationship with Jesus and guide others to Jesus. These verses remind us that when we died with Christ, we died to the lies of the world. The rules, empty philosophies and worthless pursuits masquerade as worthwhile pursuits. But as we are deceived, we end up wasting our time and creating a false humility that fails to overcome the sinfulness of the flesh. If we minimize Christianity to a set of regulations rather than be transformed by Jesus, then we will remain deceived. But when we pursue a relationship with Jesus, He promises to transform our hearts. It is only in this relationship where we will experience true grace, freedom and life.

Discussion Questions:

- Can you think of any “rules” or “regulations” today that might have the appearance of wisdom or humility, but in reality lack much spiritual value?
- What are some areas of life where we can get distracted and take our focus off Jesus?
- Where is the Lord calling you to stand firm?